

Herbert von Karajan

Location:
Leica Gallery
670 Broadway
New York, NY 10012 USA



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212.777.3051

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Reception: Thursday, 5 March, 6-8 pm

"As a true lover of photography, I always find it fascinating when looking at works such as those of Erich Lessing, the Austrian doyen of photography, to realize how the photographer's eye can open up new perspectives and perceptions for the viewer. Photographs – a cross between what is transient and what can be captured and recorded – can tell their own stories, beyond any historical or geographical boundaries. Erich Lessing's photographic oeuvre conveys in its own particular way this visualization of time, the portrayal of a subjective section of the world... Erich Lessing has always been especially fascinated by the world of art and the artist, by the challenge of demonstrating the creative process, of choosing a specific art of documentation as an approach to discovery. This ambition to realize the unreal – culture and concepts – is the underlying quality in his series of photographs taken from the artistic career of Herbert von Karajan. In dynamic, sometimes anecdotal pictures, the encounter between the young photojournalist Erich Lessing and the conductor on the threshold of world fame reflects the highest professional aspirations of both men. Erich Lessing's oeuvre is closely linked with Leica and the Leica camera. Most of the photographs in this volume were taken with a 1950s M3 camera (still extant); its technical sophistication and lenses enabled him to capture the immediacy and intensity which still draw us under the spell of events and situations." - Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, Chairman of the Board of Management and Chief Executive Officer, Leica Camera AG, from his preface to Erich Lessing's *Herbert von Karajan (Metamorphosen, Vienna, 2008)*

"Who was Herbert von Karajan? A musician, a conductor, a producer, a person interested, versed and gifted in technology, a financial genius, his own best PR manager, a showman, front-page and headline personality for gossip columns, a VIP, perhaps all of that, but above all an artistic personality who left his mark on the second half of the 20th century way beyond the field of his art... When one looks at Karajan's repertoire list, he covered the whole of Western opera music completely. Equally large, if not more extensive, was Karajan's concert repertoire... The search, the hunt for beauty and his infallible awareness of quality made Karajan an incomparably unique personality in all areas of life... Karajan was one of those people who are furnished with an awareness of quality, which is not restricted to one area of life, but covers the whole field of human existence. For him quality stretched from the wool of a pullover to the technology of a beautiful car or a beautiful sound, quality was for him an expression of the substance of life... This search for beauty was immediately apparent in his profession as conductor, the aesthetic of conducting that he invented and perfected... His carriage, his gestures were the expression of his innermost being and were placed in the service of the music while conducting... all his movements came from an incredible inner harmony... there was, it would seem, nothing in his bearing and movements that was left to chance." - Dr. Rainer Bischof, composer and professor of philosophy and musical composition, from his text, 'Herbert von Karajan or The Aesthetics of Conducting' in Erich Lessing's *Herbert von Karajan*

These images by Erich Lessing, undoubtedly one of the greatest living photographers of our time, celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Herbert von Karajan, one of the greatest conductors and musicians of the 20th century. During an unparalleled career, von Karajan, born in Salzburg in 1908, held the positions of principal conductor of the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra (1948-1953); permanent guest conductor of La Scala in Milan (appointed 1948); the principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with life-tenure (appointed in 1955 as the successor to Wilhelm Furtwängler); artistic director of the Salzburg Festival (1956-1960); musical director of the Vienna State Opera following Karl Böhm (1957-1964); a member of the board of directors of the Salzburg Festival (1964-1988); and founder of the Easter Festival in Salzburg (1967), for which he conducted new opera productions and a series of concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic on a yearly basis. As a proponent of modern technology, he enthusiastically followed developments in the field of audio-visual media. He personally founded the Telemondial Company in 1982 with the aim of preserving his musical legacy on video and laser disc. Herbert von Karajan died on 16 July 1989, after suffering heart failure at his house in Anif, Austria.

Lessing, born in Vienna in 1923, became the tenth member of Magnum Photos in 1951 and reached international recognition early in his career as a photographer who captures images that not only move the viewer but afterwards also require much reflection. Lessing worked in the 1950s and 1960s for such periodicals as LIFE, Paris Match, Quick and Picture Post documenting all aspects of

post-war Europe in photographs. He was the first photojournalist to arrive in Budapest to record the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Those images achieved worldwide fame for him and won him the American Art Directors' Award. Erich Lessing subsequently traveled throughout the world documenting historical subjects and the fine arts, resulting in the publication - along with his photojournalism monographs - of more than fifty books. He has received many honors, including the Grand Austrian State Prize for Artistic Photography. He holds the title of Professor and continues to live with his family in Vienna. Signed copies of Lessing's Herbert von Karajan (Metamorphosen, 2008) will be available throughout the exhibition.

We are honored and privileged to exhibit Erich Lessing's photographs celebrating the life of Herbert von Karajan. To us, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's words apply equally to the work of both men: Wenn es eine Freude is das Gute zu geniessen, so ist es eine grössere das Bessere zu empfinden, und in der Kunst ist das Beste gut genug. Since it is a joy to have the benefit of what is good, it is a greater one to experience what is better, and in art the best is good enough. -Rose and Jay Deutsch

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